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ABSTRACT

Student and family choice among public schools in a district and between districts was studied via a survey of 404 public school districts in New York State. Responding districts represented 56% of all operating districts in the state. District enrollments ranged from 51 to 44,250 students. Of the 404 districts, 192 had multiple buildings with similar grade levels, and thus, could offer a choice to at least some of their students. A little over one-fifth of these 192 districts did offer some form of choice among schools. In New York, choice was typically found for urban elementary schools under a district plan or policy implemented in the last decade. Only 15% of suburban and rural schools offered choice among district schools. Choice was offered by all respondents from the major urban areas of: (1) Buffalo; (2) New York City; (3) Rochester; (4) Syracuse; and (5) Yonkers. Choice was implemented for several reasons, including: child care needs of families; equality of opportunity; and racial balance and desegregation. Choice between districts was allowed for 82% of the 383 districts responding to this portion of the survey, but overall, the number of students attending school outside their districts was small. Existing choices in public education in the state appeared to be largely a result of district flexibility in meeting community needs. Six graphs, the 25-item public school district survey, and a 29-item list of references are included. (SLD)

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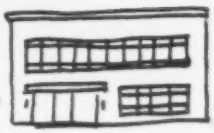
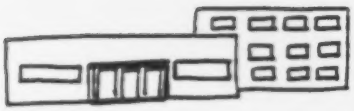
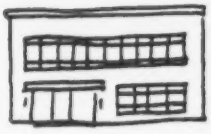



PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE IN NEW YORK STATE



A Report By The New York State School Boards Association

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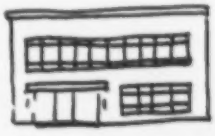

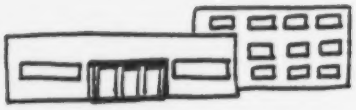

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This report was developed by the staff of the New York State School Boards Association office of research and development. For further information about the survey on which the report is based, contact Dr. Jeffrey Bowen, Administrator for Research and Development or Glen McBride, Research Assistant. A limited number of additional copies of the report are available for distribution.

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JUDITH H. KATZ, President
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October 1989

Dear Colleagues:

This report addresses the issue of student and family choice in the public school system, particularly choice among schools within a district and between districts. During hearings on public school choice held in the spring of 1989 by the Assembly Education Committee, it became apparent that, aside from a few highly publicized choice programs, little is known about the extent of choice in New York State public schools.

Recognizing the need for more information, the Association conducted a survey on public school choice to which 404 districts responded. Results from the survey are the basis for this report. The report presents a comprehensive picture of choice in New York State drawn from information provided by rural, suburban and urban districts statewide.

We thank the many superintendents and personnel who took the time to complete the survey form.

If you would like more information on choice in public schools, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Judith H. Katz

Judith H. Katz
President

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the summer of 1989, the New York State School Boards Association conducted a survey to gather information on the extent of public school choice in New York State. The issue of choice in public education is receiving increasing attention from policy makers, particularly at the national level. While some states have implemented statewide choice plans, here in New York State choice in education legislation has been introduced but has gone no further.

The following report, based on the responses of 56 percent of all operating districts in the state, presents a picture of choice in New York State that both mirrors and in some instances differs dramatically from the experiences of other states and the conclusions of other state and national reports on choice in education. Because choice in education can take many forms, the survey focused on choice involving student movement between schools in a district and between districts. The report compares information gathered from school choice plans around the nation and from rural, suburban and urban districts here in New York State.

CHOICE WITHIN DISTRICTS

- Of the 404 districts that responded to the survey, 192 (48 percent) had multiple buildings with similar grade levels and thus would be able to offer choice of schools to at least some of their students.

- A little more than one-fifth of the 192 districts that have multiple schools serving similar grades offer some form of choice among those schools.

- Typically, choice in New York State is likely to be found among elementary schools in urban districts under a district policy or plan implemented in the last decade.

- While half of the small city schools able to offer choice among schools do so, only 15 percent of suburban and rural schools allow choice among district schools. All of the respondents from the Big Five districts (Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers) offer choice among district schools.

- In districts across New York State, choice policies or plans are implemented for a number of reasons reflecting evidence from national reports on choice in education. Of the districts responding to this item, 34 percent implemented choice among schools to meet child care needs of district families. In 31 percent of the districts, choice was implemented to provide equality of opportunity. Choice was implemented to help create racial balance and to meet desegregation requirements in 23 percent of the responding districts. Meeting family needs figured strongly in the responses from rural and suburban districts. For the urban districts, creating equal opportunity and racial balance were the predominant reasons for choice implementation.

- District costs were not affected by choice according to 60 percent of those New York State districts that responded on this topic in the survey. Districts where costs increased (29 percent) are more likely to provide transportation to all students regardless of school choice and to have developed differentiated schools, such as magnet or theme schools.

- Based on the response to the survey item on achievement, no claim can be made that choice of schools increases student achievement. Only two districts (10 percent of item response) reported improved student achievement. Seven districts (33 percent) reported no change in student achievement levels and 12 districts (57 percent) had not verified the effects of choice on achievement. Researchers studying choice models in other parts of the country also have been unable to establish a direct cause and effect relationship between choice and student achievement.

- Program development does not occur simply as a result of choice of schools, but as part of a district decision to create differentiated schools of choice. Of the responding districts, 29 percent reported increases in programming diversity. These districts were largely urban districts with established policies of choice among differing schools. The majority of respondents (71 percent) indicated that programming had remained the same. It is important to note here that 56 percent of the districts that offer choice of schools do so among similar schools with no program differentiation.

- Proponents of choice in public schools argue that parent involvement increases when choice policies are implemented. In the Association survey, a majority of districts offering choice options (70 percent) reported that parent involvement had neither increased nor decreased, but had stayed the same. Thirty percent reported that parental involvement had increased.

- The implementation of choice within New York State districts has little or no effect on district administration. The lack of impact on school administration could be attributed to the predominance of choice plans that exist to meet family requests and do not entail program development or structural changes. Most common difficulties, cited by districts, are providing transportation and staffing.

- More than half of the districts that provide transportation regardless of school choice are urban. Districts where choice is offered among similar schools and to meet family needs are less likely to provide transportation. In 34 percent of the responding districts, parents must provide transportation to schools outside the home school attendance area. Thirty-one percent of the districts provide transportation regardless of school choice. The remaining districts indicated using a combination of parent and school transportation.

- New York State districts use a variety of methods to inform parents about within district choice. A little more than one-third of the districts use letters and an equal number indicated that they hold informational meetings. Forty-two percent publish newsletters and nearly half (48 percent) use the local press to inform families about school choice.

- The survey responses indicate that the major considerations for districts establishing exceptions to their choice policies are availability of space, the need to ensure racial balance, and the need to ensure adequate services for students with special needs. For 86 percent of the districts, limited space would limit choice. Over a third of the districts reported that they would limit choice if services could not be provided adequately to certain populations, e.g., students with handicapping conditions and students with limited English proficiency.

CHOICE BETWEEN DISTRICTS

Although a statewide choice plan has not received to date serious consideration in New York State, the Association wanted to find out just how much interdistrict student movement was currently taking place.

- Survey results show that a majority of New York State districts accept nonresident students. Of the 383 districts that responded to this portion of the survey, 82 percent accept students who are residents of other districts. Of those districts that accept out-of-district students, 82 percent charge a fee or tuition. Rural districts and the Big Five districts were most likely to accept nonresident students.

- A small number of New York State students opt to attend public schools outside their own districts. While the majority of districts accept nonresident students, 57 percent of those districts reported nonresidents enrollments of less than 10 students during the 1988-89 school year. Among districts that reported how many of their students traveled to other districts for their education, the average was 21 students. It is interesting to note that even in Minnesota, where a statewide interdistrict plan has been put in place, only a small fraction of students actually opt to travel to another district for their education.

- Seventy-three percent of the districts that admit nonresident students do so on a space available basis. Only nine percent had no restrictions.

- Many districts have established, without state-level instigation, working relationships with neighboring districts and colleges in order to offer students increased educational options. Fifty-one districts (13 percent of the total survey response) reported that students in their districts had benefited from courses and programs at neighboring districts. Seven districts described articulation with local institutions of higher education, for college level courses and, in some instances, for elementary instruction in college-run programs.

Existing choices in New York State are largely the result of local district flexibility in meeting the needs of the community. Districts have responded to local needs, shaping educational options which suit the demographics, resources and aspirations of their particular communities. It appears that for most districts in our state choice, if feasible, is only one of a number of avenues to school improvement.

Each winter a new movement, trumpeted by the national press, hits public education.... For 1989, the buzz word is choice. Choice, it seems, will bring schools out of the wilderness to the promised land of sensational teachers, motivated students, supportive parents and beautiful prom queens . . .

Choose carefully with choice. Some choices make good sense, but other choices stretch educational credibility.

Scott D. Thompson, Executive Director
National Association of Secondary
School Principals
NASSP NewsLeader, February 1989

While public school choice programs will not solve all of our schools problems, well-designed plans can help provide the freedom educators seek, the expanded opportunities many students need, and the dynamism the public education system requires.

Joe Nathan, Senior Fellow
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota
Education Week, April 19, 1989

THE NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION SURVEY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

During the summer of 1989, the New York State School Boards Association conducted a survey to provide information on the extent of choice within public school districts statewide. To date, no statewide assessment of public school choice had been done. The need for more information became apparent as the issue of choice appeared in the Governor's statements and State Education Department proposals for school accountability plans, emerging as a probable topic in the next legislative session. The following report, based on the responses of 56 percent of all operating districts in the state, presents a picture of choice in New York State that both mirrors, and, in some instances, differs dramatically from, the experiences of other states and the conclusions of other state and national reports on choice in education.

BACKGROUND

What is meant by "choice in education"? Depending on the critic or proponent and the institutional context, choice in education can mean many things. To some, choice means voucher or tuition tax credit systems enabling parents to choose among public and private schools and to carry some amount of funding with them. Most recently, however, outspoken proponents have shifted their attention to choice within and among public school districts. Choice, in the case of Minnesota's highly publicized statewide plan, means students may opt to attend any public school district in the state, to attend college courses while in high school and for dropouts the ability to reenter any public school of choice.

Public school choice may mean open enrollment, the option to attend one of several or any schools within a district. In this instance, students and their families may choose from among magnet or alternative schools, "schools" within schools, or among similar grade level buildings within a district.

Choice in public school districts can also be among program options; for example, choice among curricula or instructional methods. In New York State, Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) expand educational choices through a variety of vocational and occupational education programs. BOCES also help expand course options for students in small or geographically isolated districts, providing itinerant instructors and a variety of academic programs. Preschool and collaborative interdistrict arrangements may also provide a variety of educational choices in public school systems.

THE STATE DEBATE

In the past year, more than 20 states have introduced or passed choice legislation. Best known is Minnesota's highly publicized statewide choice plan. Other states that have or are in the process of enacting variations of statewide choice plans include Massachusetts, Arkansas, Colorado, New Jersey, Iowa and Washington.

In New York State, choice in education legislation has been introduced but has gone no further. A spectrum of proponents and critics of choice testified before the Assembly Education Committee during the spring of 1989. During the hearings it became apparent that little is known about the extent of choice, particularly within and among public school districts in New York State. Plans such as the New York City District #4 program offering choice among junior high schools, and similar choice and magnet programs in the larger urban areas, have received much attention in the press. However, information was lacking concerning choice in the state's rural, suburban and small city districts.

The issue of choice in education is of special concern to school boards across the state, particularly when choice refers to mandated statewide plans, similar to the Minnesota plan. We do know that the New York State public education system offers a wealth of choice to students and their families, whether among schools, curricula or instructional methods and that existing choices are largely the result of flexibility at the local district level. What we needed to find out was just how those local districts have addressed the issue of choices among their schools and/or neighboring districts, choices involving movement of students from one school or district to another.

THE SURVEY

Because so many of the current choice plans under consideration in various states involve choice among schools within a district and/or choice between districts, the Association survey was designed to gather information on the extent of choice that involves student movement between schools or between districts. Schools, in this instance, refers to distinct school buildings. The survey did not address program choices and other options that do not involve movement of students from one school setting to another.

The Association wanted to know to what extent districts with the capability of offering choice of schools do so. Further, we investigated what types of districts are offering choices among their schools and the reasons behind the

implementation of choice plans. Had districts wrestled with the issue of choice and what had they decided to do? From districts offering choice among their schools, we sought information concerning the impact on costs, student achievement and program development. The impact of choice plans on parent involvement and district administration was also explored. One of the biggest concerns is transportation and its often high costs. The Association survey asked districts to provide information on transportation policies under choice plans. The Association also wanted to know how districts inform families about choice. Information regarding the impact of choice policies on district administration and the nature of exemptions to those polices also was gathered.

Although New York State has not adopted an interdistrict choice plan, the Association wanted to know how many students opt to attend a district other than their district of residence and how many districts currently accept students from other districts. Survey questions addressed tuition arrangements and admittance procedures.

The results of the Association survey have yielded a comprehensive picture of choice among schools and districts. The following report compares information gathered from school choice plans around the nation and from rural, suburban, and urban districts here in New York State.

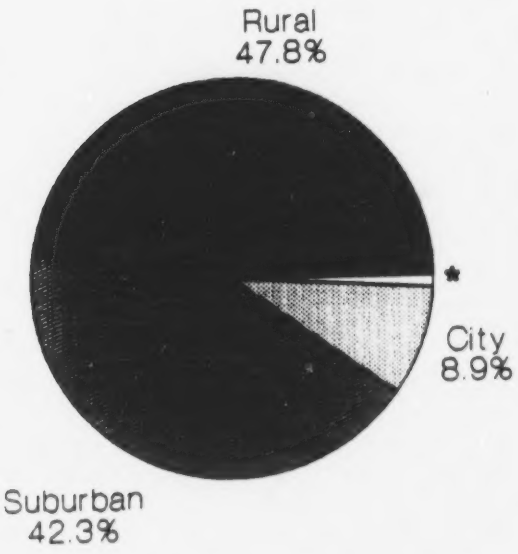
WHO RESPONDED?

A 25 item survey form was sent to all public school districts in the state, including union free, central and city districts (see Appendix A for survey form). BOCES were not included as it was determined that the range of educational choices offered through their programs warrants a separate survey. A total of 404 districts (56 percent of all operating districts) responded to our survey.[1] District enrollments ranged from 44,250 to 51.

Districts were asked to report whether they were rural, suburban, small city or one of the Big Five districts, comprised of Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers. Of the districts, 48 percent (193) were rural, and 42 percent (171) were suburban. Thirty-six of the 57 small city districts in New York State, or nine percent of the survey response, and four of the Big Five districts responded to our request for information (see Chart A).

Chart A

TYPE OF DISTRICTS RESPONDING
TO ASSOCIATION SURVEY



* Four of the Big Five districts responded to the survey (1.0%)
Number of Districts Reporting: 404

The responding districts represented a range of building and grade configurations. Rural schools were most likely to have a single K-12 building, or one elementary and one upper grade building. Suburban and small city districts most often had two or more elementary schools, one or more middle or junior high schools, and normally one high school. The Big Five districts all had multiple buildings in a variety of grade configurations.

CHOICE WITHIN DISTRICTS

The Association survey addressed the extent of choice among school buildings within districts. For many districts, for example, those with a single K-12 building, choice of schools is not feasible. Of the total response, 192 districts, or 48 percent, had multiple buildings with similar grade levels and thus would be able to offer choice of schools to at least some of their students. All 192 districts had multiple elementary schools that had the same grade configurations within each school. Thirty-five of the 192 districts indicating multiple configurations had more than one middle or junior high school and only 18 had more than one high school.[2]

It is important to note here that 21 districts responding to the survey had multiple grade schools and had chosen to distribute grade levels across the buildings. For example, in a district with three elementary schools, one building would serve pre-K, another grades one through two and another, grades

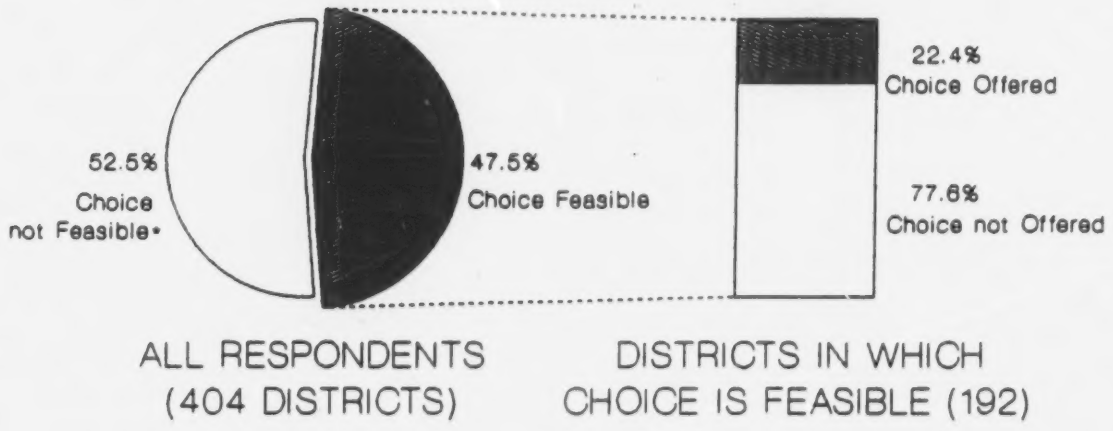
three through six. This plan, sometimes referred to as the Princeton Plan, restricts choice among buildings but provides schools with groups of children close to each other in age and instructional need.

WHERE IS PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE OFFERED IN NEW YORK STATE?

A little more than one-fifth of the 192 districts that have multiple schools serving similar grades offer some form of choice among those schools (see Chart B). These 43 districts represent 11 percent of the total survey response. Typically, choice in New York State is likely to be found among elementary schools in urban districts under a district policy or plan implemented in the last decade.

Chart B

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE WITHIN NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

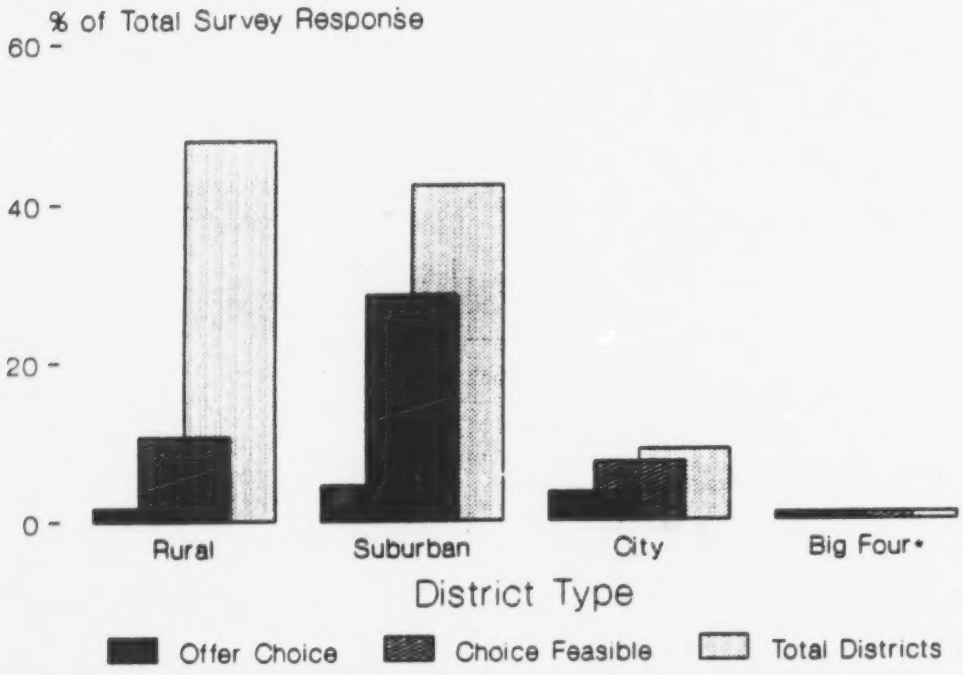


• These districts do not have multiple buildings with similar grade configurations

Reflecting nationwide trends, public school choice in New York State is most prevalent in the cities (see Chart C). All four of the Big Five respondents offer choice among all or some of their schools and half of the 30 small cities able to offer choice do so. While two-thirds (115) of the suburban districts responding to the Association survey have multiple buildings with similar grade configurations, only 15 percent (17) of those suburban districts able to do so offer choice. The overwhelming majority of rural districts (78 percent) do not have multiple schools at the elementary, middle or junior high, or high school levels. Fifteen percent of rural districts offer choice where feasible. However, this percentage represents only seven districts.

Chart C

DISTRICT TYPE AND CHOICE



*Four of the Big Five districts responded to the survey. All four offer choice among schools.

Feasibility does not, however, fully explain why some districts offer choice among their schools and some do not. The high incidence of choice in urban districts, for example, can be attributed to available space, the need to meet desegregation requirements, limited distances between schools, and the diversity and specialized needs of students served by the districts. The reasons districts responding to the Association survey gave for implementing choice policies are reviewed later in this report.

The extent of choice among schools varies. For example, of the 43 districts that have choice policies, 58 percent (25) offer unrestricted choice at one or more grade levels. Unrestricted choice refers to open enrollment among all schools at a particular grade level. Twenty-five districts offer limited choice at either the elementary, middle or junior high, or senior high levels. Several districts reported offering combinations of limited and unlimited choice. .While a district may provide unlimited choice among its elementary schools, choice at the high school level may be limited to a magnet or alternative school and may not include other high schools in the district.

Some respondents indicated the year or years in which choice policies were implemented. Clearly, the most active decade for choice implementation has been the 1980s, followed closely by the 1970s. One district offered choice as early

as 1950, and several respondents could not remember when long-standing choice policies were initially instituted.

ARE DISTRICTS CONSIDERING CHOICE POLICIES?

Given the frequency of articles in every major education journal and periodical addressing the pros and cons of choice and the increasing emphasis placed on public school choice at the federal level, the survey was designed to assess whether and to what extent the issue of choice was being considered and discussed by local district leadership. Although the response to this particular series of questions was limited, the responses, in their variation, are worthy of note.

Three districts indicated that they considered offering choice, then decided not to. Reasons cited for this decision included concerns regarding transportation issues, the reluctance of district leadership to implement choice policies, and the impact of the 1972 Fleischmann Report on the Quality, Cost and Finance of Elementary and Secondary Education in New York State. The report called for equal educational opportunity and, in an appendix, raised concerns regarding voucher and choice plans.

Four districts indicated that they had offered choice and then discontinued the plan. Reasons for discontinuation included lack of parental interest in choosing other than a neighborhood school, the creation of de jure segregation, and increased transportation costs.

Four districts currently offering choice options reported considering eliminating choice and then opting not to. Reasons for continuation of choice included satisfaction with current policy, the need to help working families with child care arrangements, and school board support. No districts reported eliminating, then reinstating choice policies.

WHY ARE CHOICE POLICIES IMPLEMENTED?

Background

In her review of research literature on choice, Mary Anne Raywid concludes that the three general reasons for the creation of schools of choice in the 1980s are desegregation, revitalization, and dropout prevention.[3] However, specific evidence is limited concerning the reasons why local districts create schools of choice or implement choice policies among existing schools. The only two national surveys of schools of choice conducted within the last decade -- Raywid's study of public alternative high schools and a report on magnet schools at all levels by Blank et al. -- were completed in 1981.[4] Since that time, magnet and alternative schools have become more widespread, as have other forms of public school choice and the reasons for implementing these options have become more diversified.

As one illustration, in Lowell, Massachusetts the goals of intradistrict, or within district, "controlled choice" were to improve the quality of education to make better use of space and to linguistically integrate the district. Lowell has one of the largest Cambodian communities in the country, the result of recruitment by a growing electronics industry.[5]

While information about district reasons for choice implementation is limited, clues can be found in studies of parent and student choices. The reasons why parents and students select schools influence the reasons why districts implement choice policies, since most public school districts are responsive to some degree to family needs, whether formally or informally.

In an article describing school choice within his district, Lewis Finch, Superintendent of the Anoka-Hennepin School District in Minnesota, noted that the vast majority of requests for within district transfers were based on "convenience and location, rather than on the quality of education in a given school."[6] A study of choice in West Virginia's Ohio County schools determined that although given a choice of elementary schools that varied in their instructional approach, families were most likely to choose on the basis of child care considerations.[7] However, data from student applications for choice in Minnesota during 1987-88 show a greater percentage choosing for curricular or academic reasons (44 percent) than those choosing for child care, transportation, or other logistical reasons (26 percent).[8]

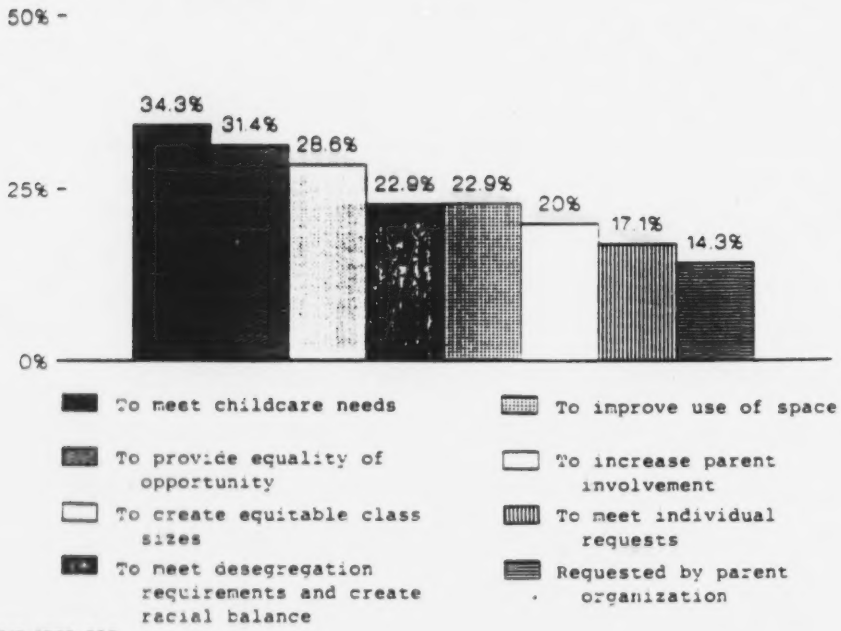
Critics of choice plans note, too, that district reasons for implementation are often not reflected in the outcome. Designs for Change, a Chicago-based research organization, studied magnet programs in Boston, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia and found that, rather than desegregate many magnet schools have resulted in "a new form of segregation by social class and by previous success in school."[9]

The Survey Response

District response to the Association survey concerning reasons for implementing choice are shown on chart below (Chart D).

Chart D

DISTRICT REASONS FOR
IMPLEMENTATION OF CHOICE POLICIES



Many districts reported more than one reason.
Number of Districts Reporting 35

Of the 35 districts that responded to this section of the survey, 12 districts, or 34 percent, indicated that choice was implemented to meet child care needs of district families. For 11 districts, choice policies were instituted to provide equality of opportunity. Eight districts indicated that choice was implemented to meet desegregation orders and to create racial balance. Parental needs figure strongly in the reasons for implementation. Six districts indicated that they offered choice of schools to meet individual requests; another five began choice at the recommendation or request of a parent organization. Improved use of space and program enhancement were also reported as reasons for choice implementation.

Three districts reported that it was easy to offer choice because they were small and could informally meet family needs. Another three districts implemented choice to prevent loss of students to nonpublic schools. One district reported choice was initiated as an alternative for peer problems. Another reported that a preference for smaller classes was the impetus for implementation. Choice would enhance the resources of the district, according to another respondent.

Clearly, in districts across the state, choice is implemented for a number of reasons. In rural districts, creating equitable class sizes, space considerations and child care arrangements were the most common reasons. Meeting child care needs and providing equal opportunity were most frequently cited by the suburban respondents. For the urban districts, both small cities and the Big Five, creating equal opportunity and racial balance, whether under a

desegregation order or voluntarily, were the predominant reasons for choice implementation.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF CHOICE IMPLEMENTATION?

Background

Choice is expensive -- so say its critics. Implementation of choice is not feasible in an era of belt-tightening and budget defeats. Proponents counter that initially, planning and implementation is costly but that once plans are well-established, costs even out. The benefits of choice plans they contend are well worth the initial investment.

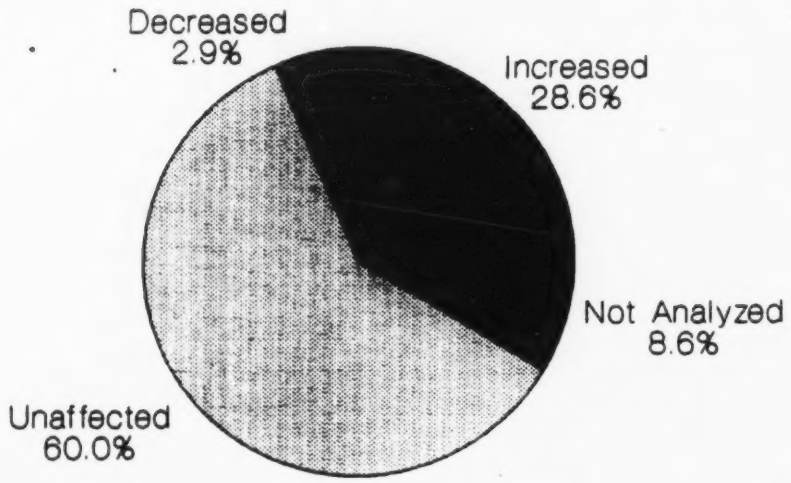
Lowell, Massachusetts experienced a large increase in transportation costs when choice was implemented, but better use of space was also a result. The Milwaukee city schools also experienced a tremendous increase in transportation costs. Their solution: to create regional attendance zones with choice limited to these zones. The Montclair, New Jersey school district found that costs stopped expanding as choice, initiated in 1974, became firmly established. St. Louis experienced high transportation costs and also found that, to attract families and students, funds were needed to repair deteriorating inner city school buildings.[10] A study of the St. Louis experience indicates that the gap between the higher costs of magnets and the costs of comprehensive schools, rather than leveling off, has increased.[11] In a study conducted for the National Governor's Association Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice[12] planning and early implementation costs are those cited as most significant. Most of the districts included in the study received federal or state support and would not be in existence, according to the report, if they had been dependent on local tax revenues.

The Survey Response

District costs were not affected by choice according to 60 percent of those New York State districts that reported to the Association on the effects of choice on school expenditures. Costs increased for 29 percent of the districts. One district (three percent) reported costs decreased, and four districts (nine percent) had not analyzed the costs of choice (see Chart E).

Chart E

EFFECTS OF CHOICE IMPLEMENTATION
ON DISTRICT COSTS



Number of Districts Reporting: 35

Thirteen districts offered further explanations of the effects on school expenditures. Two districts noted that their costs remained the same and explained that parents must provide transportation to schools of choice. Seven districts cited the need to provide transportation as the major reason for increased costs. Other contributors to increases were the need for additional staff, staff development and inservice, equipment and school renovation. The cost decrease, mentioned above, was attributed to balanced class sizes.

It is clear from the response that districts that provide limited choice, particularly to meet individual family requests and also do not provide transportation to the schools of choice, experience little impact on district expenditures. Districts that provide transportation to all students regardless of school choice and those that have developed differentiated schools, such as magnet or theme schools, have incurred the greatest increases in expenditures.

DOES CHOICE INFLUENCE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT?

Background

In a review of public choice issues for the Center for Policy Research in Education, Richard Elmore found no evidence that there is a "simple causal relationship" between choice and academic performance.[13] However, proponents of choice often cite improved student achievement as a positive effect of choice.

Mary Anne Raywid cites numerous studies but notes their limitations.[14] Other factors such as school climate, teacher and student attitudes and parental involvement may also affect student achievement. While studies show that implementation of choice may favorably affect these factors, implementation of other structural reforms may also positively affect attitudes, climate, involvement and, ultimately, student achievement. There have been no experimental studies that clearly isolate choice as a factor in academic achievement.

New York City's District 4, where students opt among 24 alternative junior high schools, and where student test scores have increased dramatically since the implementation of choice, is most often used by choice proponents as an example of the positive effects of choice. However, researchers involved in the Designs for Change study claim that only certain students benefit and cite the fact that schools within District 4 "vary from those where 98 percent of students read above grade level to schools where only 30 percent do."[15]

THE SURVEY RESPONSE

Given the ambiguous connections between choice policies and student achievement, it is not surprising that the response to our survey item on this topic was low. The survey item was two-part -- one, respondents were asked whether they <u>believed</u> achievement had been affected, and two, respondents were asked to report what actual impact choice had made on student achievement. While four respondents <u>believed</u> choice had affected student achievement, seventeen did not. This response could be attributed to the fact that many district policies offer choice of similar schools for family convenience, rather than choice of schools with different programs or instructional organization. (Of 43 districts, 56 percent (24) offer choice among similar schools and 44 percent (19) offer alternatives or theme schools at the elementary and/or high school level.)

Of the 21 districts that responded to the second part of the achievement item, only two districts (10 percent) reported improved student achievement. Seven (33 percent) reported that achievement remained the same, while no district claimed achievement had declined as a result of choice within the district. Twelve districts (57 percent) reported that the effects of open enrollment on student achievement had not been verified.

For the most part, districts offering further comment on student achievement and choice indicated that student achievement stayed the same or that the effects of choice could not be verified. While several respondents conjectured that choice led to improved student and parent attitudes, commitment, and support for the schools, and thus could positively improve student achievement, no verification was possible. One district citing improvement credited magnet schools for reducing the high transiency rate between schools in the district which had adversely affected achievement.

Based on the response to the survey item on achievement, no claim can be made that choice of schools increases student achievement. This finding parallels the experience of other researchers investigating the impact of choice on achievement.

ARE DISTRICT PROGRAMS AFFECTED BY CHOICE PLANS?

Background

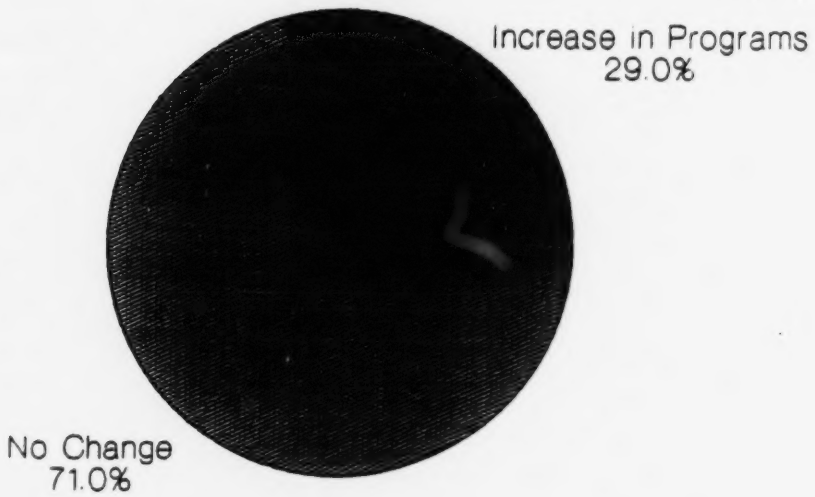
There is debate over the issue of the impact of choice on school programs. Choice in public schools has been credited with invigorating the development of diverse programs, thus more effectively meeting differing student needs and interests. However, this issue can quickly turn into the age-old chicken and the egg debate -- which came first, choice or program diversity. In the case of District 4, the development of junior high magnets preceded the decision to offer open enrollment.[16] Once choice was instituted and expanded, all the junior high schools in the district eventually became magnet or theme schools. When district schools are standardized and choice is offered for family convenience, then program development is less likely to result. Bella Rosenberg, in her article entitled "Public School Choice: Can We Find the Right Balance?" describes open enrollment among similar schools as a "safety valve" for dissatisfied parents and not a policy that will greatly affect program diversity.[17]

The Survey Response

Thirty-one districts responded to a survey item that asked whether the number and/or variety of programs had been affected by open enrollment (see Chart F). Nine districts, or 29 percent of those responding to this item, reported increases in programming diversity. These districts were largely urban districts with established policies of choice among differing schools. The majority of respondents (71 percent) indicated that programming had remained the same. No district decreased programming as a direct result of choice policies. However, one district claimed overcrowding created by choice policies led to a "gridlock" schedule and a subsequent decrease in program development.

Chart F

CHOICE AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT



Number of Districts Reporting: 31

Eight of the ten districts that provided descriptions of program development under choice policies indicated that program diversity had increased, in many cases the result of magnet school grants and more freedom for schools to experiment and differentiate programs.

It is important to note again that 56 percent of the districts that offer choice of schools do so among similar schools with no program differentiation. Program development it appears does not occur simply as a result of choice of schools, but as part of a district decision to create differentiated schools of choice.

DO PARENTS BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THE SCHOOLS WHEN CHOICE POLICIES ARE IMPLEMENTED?

Background

Parents who can choose their children's schools are more actively involved with the education of their offspring. So say the proponents of choice. Critics of choice counter that parents are less likely to be involved in a school that may be far from their home neighborhood. It is involved parents who are most likely to opt for schools of choice, creating the appearance of increased parental involvement. Once again, limited evidence is available to support either argument.

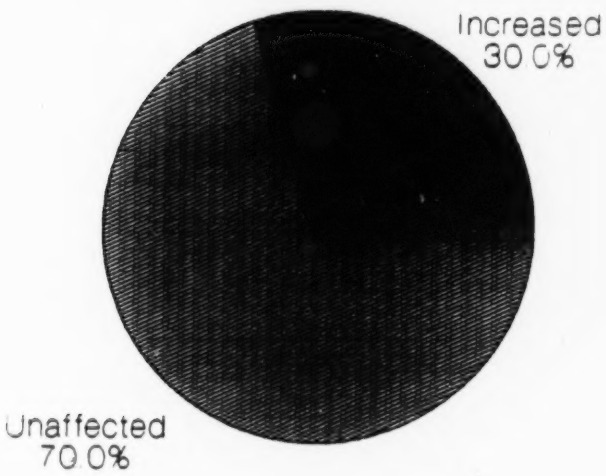
In a 1986/87 Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll, 68 percent of public school parents desired the right to choose. However, only 24 percent would actually select a different school if the option existed.[18] In a 1984 study of 41 magnet schools in New York State, parental involvement was found to be high. In almost half of the schools, at least 50 percent of the parents were actively involved.[19] Merely giving parents a choice of schools will not necessarily increase participation in school activities. It is more likely that programs that actively encourage parent participation, whether in schools of choice or neighborhood schools, will be most successful in increasing parent involvement. Such programs abound in New York State's public schools. Schools as Community Sites, Pre-Kindergarten and Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention and PSEN/Chapter 1 remedial programs all have provisions for parent involvement. Successful programs that receive support through New York's Transferring Success grant program are Project Prep, with an early childhood emphasis, and Growing Up Together, where parents, teachers and children learn together.

The Survey Response

In the Association survey, a majority of the districts offering choice options (70 percent) reported that parent involvement had neither increased nor decreased, but had stayed the same. Thirty percent indicated that involvement had increased (see Chart G).

Chart G

EFFECTS OF CHOICE POLICIES ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT



Number of Districts Reporting: 30

Six districts described how parent involvement had been affected. A parent information center was the outgrowth of one district's choice policy implementation. Another district explained that parents had more "ownership" in the schools when they must communicate with the school regarding school selection and also when they must transport their children to the school of choice. A large city district actively involves parents of eighth graders in informed choice activities. One district reported that parent involvement had increased due to interest but also decreased due to the greater distances from home to school. It appears that districts offering choice of differentiated schools are more likely to experience increased parent involvement, while districts offering choice of similar schools for the convenience of individual families showed little change in parental involvement. However, 12 of the 19 districts offering choice among dissimilar schools, did not experience an increase in parental involvement.

DO CHOICE POLICIES AFFECT DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT?

Background

Proponents of choice among schools claim that under choice policies the often rigid school bureaucracy will, of necessity, become more flexible. The result, in the view of some, would be a decentralization of district administration and a diversification among district schools. There appears, however, to be little actual documentation of the impact of choice on specific aspects of school administration. The Association survey, therefore, was designed to assess the impact of choice policies on certain administrative functions, such as recordkeeping, grouping, and provision of support services.

The Survey Response

Twenty-seven districts responded to questions concerning the impact of choice of schools on school administration. The following table indicates response by number of districts:

TABLE A
CHOICE AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Choice of Schools Has Made:	More Difficult	No Effect	Easier
Provision of support services	6	17	1
Allocation of classroom space	6	13	7
Staffing	7	15	5
Compliance with state regulations	3	21	1
Student recordkeeping	1	24	0
Student grouping	3	20	2
Transportation of students	14	10	0

The greatest difficulty for districts clearly is the transportation of students, followed by staffing. It is interesting to note that seven districts found allocation of classroom space to be easier and five districts noted staffing became easier. Generally, though, the implementation of choice within districts had little or no effect on district administration. The lack of impact on school administration could be attributed to the predominance of choice plans that exist to meet family requests and do not entail program development or structural changes.

WHO TRANSPORTS STUDENTS TO SCHOOLS OF CHOICE?

Background

Transportation, while difficult for many districts to provide, is an important factor in the success or failure of choice plans. Plans that do not include transportation limit accessibility for many parents. Enumerating essential elements of good choice plans, Joe Nathan, a vocal choice advocate, includes transportation for all students within a reasonable geographical area.[20] There are, however, considerable cost increases for districts where great distances are involved. As was mentioned earlier, some large districts are experimenting with choice within smaller zones to minimize transportation expenditures.

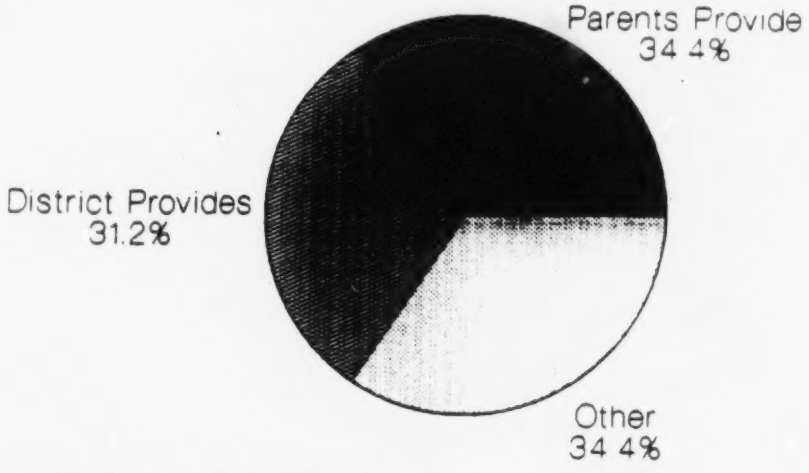
The Survey Response

The Association survey examined district transportation policies regarding open enrollment and limited choice plans (see Chart H). Eleven districts (34 percent of the 32 responding to this item) indicated that parents must provide transportation to schools outside the home school attendance area. Ten districts, or 31 percent, provide transportation regardless of school choice. Two districts (six percent) provide transportation to specified schools only. Other districts indicated that they used combinations of parent and school transportation. Several schools indicated that parents may drive their children to a bus stop serving the school of choice. One district provides a shuttle bus from the home school to the school of choice. More than half of the districts

that provided transportation regardless of school choice were urban. Districts where choice was provided among similar schools and to meet family needs were less likely to provide transportation.

Chart H

TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOLS OF CHOICE



•Other includes district transportation to specific schools only, and parent/district transportation arrangements.

HOW DO DISTRICTS INFORM PARENTS ABOUT SCHOOL CHOICE?

Background

Information and education about district choice policies and options are necessary to ensure that parents and students can make appropriate decisions. The Cambridge, Massachusetts district is cited as a model for successful parental outreach. The district has a high level of participation by low-income and minority families. Its outreach program also receives substantial financial support from the state. Parent liaisons run a parent information center and produce a weekly newsletter. The district also produces a booklet that describes each school's philosophy, programs and procedures.[21] Other methods of providing information to, and gathering it from, families include parent surveys, meetings, brochures, printed media and local radio and television.

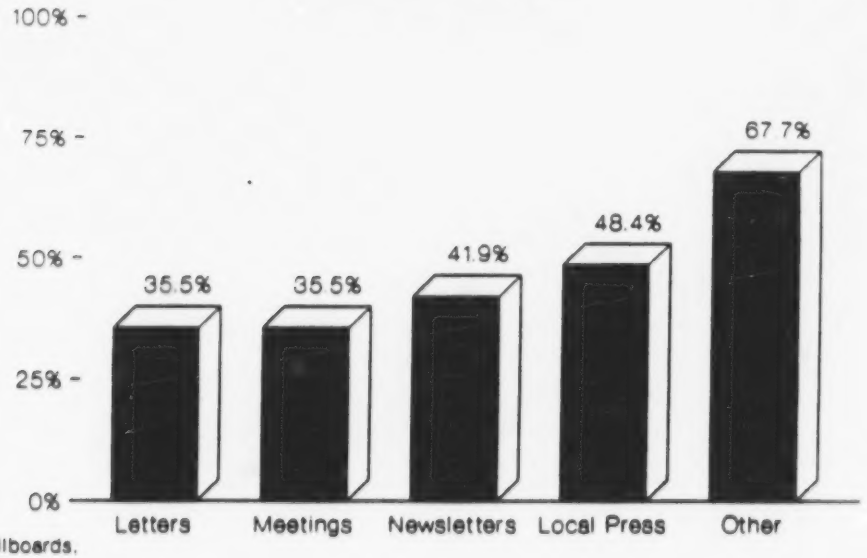
The Survey Response

The Association survey revealed that a little over one-third of the districts that reported on their methods of informing parents use letters and an equal number indicated that they hold informational meetings (see Chart I). Forty-two percent publish newsletters and nearly half (48 percent) use the local press to inform families about school choice. Twenty-one districts described other methods of disseminating information including fairs and open houses, posters in stores and buses, billboards, and via child care providers and neighborhood associations. A few districts that offer limited choice, usually

to meet individual requests, rely solely on word-of-mouth. Generally, survey results show districts employing a number of methods to ensure that parents and students are aware of available options.

Chart I

INFORMING THE PUBLIC



•Other includes posters, billboards, fairs and open houses.
Number of Districts Reporting: 31

WHEN ARE THERE EXCEPTIONS TO DISTRICT CHOICE POLICIES?

Background

If anything is clear from the literature on choice, it is that there is no standardization of choice plans. Every district offers a choice plan shaped by the district's size, resources and diversity. Districts must weigh issues of school size, equality of opportunity, cost and need. For many districts, particularly those where choices may be limited, "controlled choice" is an option. In these instances, parents and students state several school choices in rank order. The district then assigns students, taking student preferences, space, racial balance and sibling placement into consideration. The percentage of students who get their first choice can differ greatly from district to district. In Milwaukee's school system, 95 percent of the students received one of their choices. In Lowell, Massachusetts, 65 percent of all parents received their first choice. It is interesting to note here that 50 percent of those parents opted for their neighborhood schools as the schools of first choice.[22]

The Survey Response

In their responses to our survey, 29 districts described instances where open enrollment options must be limited. Understandably, districts must limit choice if space is unavailable. For 86 percent, or 25, of the districts limited space would limit choice. Four districts (14 percent) reported limiting choice if compliance with a desegregation order was in question. Ten districts (35

percent) would limit choice options if services could not be provided adequately to certain populations, e.g., students with handicapping conditions and students with limited English proficiency. The survey responses indicate that the major considerations for districts establishing exceptions to their choice policies are availability of space, the need to ensure racial balance, and the need to ensure adequate services for students with special needs.

CHOICE BETWEEN DISTRICTS

BACKGROUND

While many states, New York among them, have opted to encourage the development of a variety of educational alternatives at the local level, increasing attention is being focussed on statewide choice programs, most notably Minnesota's interdistrict plan. While few statewide programs are actually in place, and none to date have yielded substantial evidence of overall educational improvement, statewide choice is politically provocative. Bella Rosenberg calls the push for statewide choice "more rhetorical than real" citing the fact that less than one percent of students actually participate in Minnesota's interdistrict choice plan.[23] However, proponents like Governor Rudy Perpich and Commissioner of Education Ruth Randall contend that competition for students will promote school improvement and program development, particularly in tight financial times.[24]

It is just those tight finances that concern many critics of interdistrict choice. William Baker, executive director of the Minnesota School Boards Association, objects to the transfer of state funds with students.[25] The loss of funds makes effective competition difficult, revenue losses in some districts equalling several teachers' salaries. Double funding, where the home district and district of choice may both count a student, is, for many states, cost prohibitive.

Some see interdistrict choice as the expansion of urban-suburban transfer programs into a larger context. But what happens to rural districts? In a positive light, competition may promote greater interdistrict cooperation, or it may force consolidation of districts, not always a politically happy solution. And what of equal opportunity for rural students? Distance and geography can effectively limit choice, particularly when transportation is not provided by the districts. (According to the Minnesota Department of Education, in 1987/88 61 percent of a sample of families provided transportation to the district of choice boundary.[26]) As a result, choice is unlikely to be an option for children of working and poor parents. Rosenberg warns that interdistrict choice may "rescue a minority of students while damning the majority."[27] Lewis Finch, a Minnesota superintendent, contends that interdistrict choice is a placebo for problems that the state has not addressed, among them increasing class sizes, inequities in funding among school districts, and a decrease during the past decade in per-pupil education spending.[28]

Although a statewide choice plan has not received to date serious consideration in New York State, the Association wanted to find out just how much interdistrict movement was currently taking place. Responses did not include distance learning through interactive telecommunications or BOCES programs in district facilities.

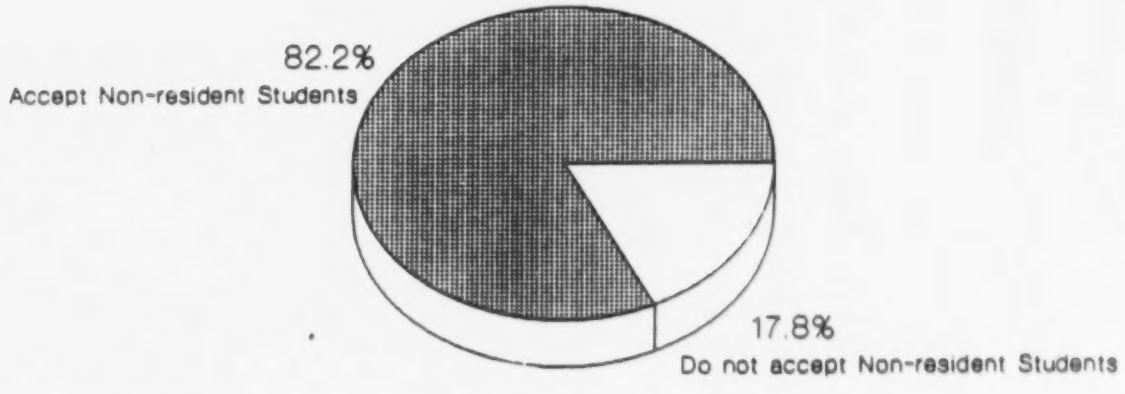
THE SURVEY RESPONSE

Do districts accept nonresident students?

A total of 383 districts responded to this portion of the survey. Eighty-two percent (315) accept students who are residents of other districts. Sixty-eight districts do not (see Chart J). Of those districts that accept out-of-district students, 82 percent (257) charge a fee or tuition. Eighteen percent (56) report that they do not charge. Under New York State education law, districts need not charge tuition.[29] However, when they do, the charge for each nonresident student must not exceed the actual net cost of educating the student, based on a formula established by Part 174 of the Commissioner's Regulations.[30] Districts are free to charge less than the actual net cost of education the student.

Chart J

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE AMONG NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS



Total Responses = 383

Rural districts and the Big Five were most likely to accept nonresident students. Ninety percent of the rural districts and all four of the Big Five respondents reported accepting nonresidents. Roughly three-quarters of the rural districts and two of four Big Five charge tuition. Two-thirds of the suburban districts and 75 percent of the small cities accept nonresidents and in both cases, over 95 percent charge tuition.

Districts were also asked if they accepted children of nonresident teachers. Of 313 districts, 62 percent (195) reported that they do. In 124 districts, tuition is not charged to nonresident children of teachers. Sixty-five districts charge all nonresident students tuition regardless of whether the parent is a teacher employed by the district. Arrangements for children of other nonresident district employees were not addressed by this survey.

How many nonresident students attend public school districts?

While the majority of districts accept nonresident students, 57 percent of those districts reported nonresident enrollments of less than 10 students during the 1988-89 school year. The number of nonresident students accepted during the 1988-89 school year ranged from 1 to 760. Districts reporting these counts include those who have transfer arrangements with districts serving only elementary grades, thus boosting the numbers in some instances.

Along with a count of nonresident students in their districts, superintendents were asked to report the number of resident students who opted to attend other public school districts on a full-time basis during the 1988-89 school year. One hundred forty-two districts reported that school-aged residents of their district had opted to attend another public school district. Numbers of students traveling to other districts for their education ranged from 1 to 631. The average per reporting district was 21 students.

How are nonresident students admitted?

Of the districts that admit nonresident students, 73 percent do so on a space available basis. Only nine percent had no restrictions. Most choice plans in New York and other states operate on a space-available basis. Clearly, space is an essential consideration when numbers of students in particular buildings fluctuate.

Thirty-five percent of the responding districts reported a variety of other procedures for admitting out-of-district students. Thirteen districts accept students on a "case-by-case" basis. Twenty districts or six percent of the districts responding to this survey item reported that there is a mutual agreement among two or more districts to accept nonresident students. Seven districts reported serving students by contract with other districts.

School board review and policies play an integral role in nonresident admittance procedures. Under New York State Education Law, nonresident students may be admitted to a district upon consent of the board and under terms established by the board.[31] Twenty-six districts reported accepting nonresident students upon school board review and approval or via district policy. Another fourteen districts require consent of the principal, superintendent and/or board of education. Four other districts indicated that they accepted only nonresident students with handicapping conditions or those who require special education programs.

The additional comments and policies included in the survey response indicated that some districts allow high school juniors whose families move out of the district to remain and complete their senior year. Ten districts provided information about this policy.

Interdistrict choice need not mean losing a student to another district. Many statewide choice plans, including Minnesota's, encourage both interdistrict cooperation to expand course offerings and programs and the development of programs for public school students at local colleges and universities.

The Association survey asked whether students took courses through cooperative agreements with other districts during the 1988-89 school year. (District arrangements with BOCES were not included in this survey.) Fifty-one districts (13 percent of total survey response) reported that students in their

districts had benefited from courses and programs at neighboring districts. Numbers of students ranged from 1 to 70, with an average of 13 students per district. Seven districts described articulation with local institutions of higher education, both for college level courses and in some instances, for elementary instruction in college-run programs. One district described sharing athletic programs with a neighboring district, while another described sharing summer programs. This evidence of interdistrict cooperation and links between districts and institutions of higher education is significant. It appears that many districts have established, without state-level instigation, working relationships with neighboring districts and colleges in order to offer students increased educational options.

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents to the Association survey ranged from large city districts offering a variety of choices for students and their families to small, rural districts with limited or no ability to offer choice among schools. Typically, the large, urban districts have developed extensive and exemplary choices among schools and programs for their students. However, a far greater number of New York's public school districts offer limited within district choices, in part as a result of geographic, financial, and facility limitations. While many districts may face limitations, there is evidence that some districts have collaborated with neighboring districts and institutions of higher education to offer expanded educational options to their students.

Survey results indicate that many districts implement choice, particularly among grade schools, to accommodate the needs of families juggling work and child care. Therefore, choice of schools in most New York State public school districts is used less as an educational option and more as a way to meet community needs.

Regardless of the reasons why choice was implemented, transportation was cited as a major administrative concern. Proponents and critics of choice both cite the importance of equitable access to transportation to ensure equal opportunity for all students. The survey found, however, that transportation created the most difficulties for district administrators and was major cause of increased district costs.

Despite proponents' claims that choice of schools increases parent involvement, the survey results indicate that in many cases parent involvement did not increase, whether the choice was made to meet family needs or to place the student in a school offering a particular program.

Program development was clearly linked to the types of choices offered in the district. Districts receiving magnet school aid were able to develop new programs and some districts encouraged their schools to develop differing programs. On the whole, however, existing choice policies in New York State have led to little program diversity.

Very few districts were able to report that student achievement had been affected by choice policy implementation. The majority of those districts reporting on student achievement acknowledged the difficulty in verifying a direct cause and effect relationship between choice and improved student achievement.

Regarding student movement between districts, survey results show that a small number of students do opt to attend public schools outside their own districts and a majority of New York State districts accept nonresident students. It is interesting to note that even in Minnesota, where a statewide interdistrict choice plan has been put in place, also only a small fraction of students opt to travel to another district for their education.

Although not pervasive in New York State, choice in public education remains a volatile issue. This is evident in comments offered by survey respondents. While many of the districts that have implemented choice policies stated positive effects, comments also included concerns that choice will create elitist and segregated schools, a "two-tiered educational system." A suburban district stated that choice would be an "absurdity," would serve "no meaningful advantage" and that parents, given choice would "seek a particular teacher, not a school."

Rural schools covering large geographic areas noted both the restrictions of cost and time when providing transportation to other districts. Several small districts related the devastating impact of movement of even a few children on state aid and program offerings. One respondent felt that choice would further the perception that bigger is better, and that students, particularly athletes, would flee the smaller district for the larger.

While choice may be a component of initiatives to improve education in some districts, the goal of those committed to public education must be to improve the quality of all schools. Choice should not become a "new, improved sorting machine," a term coined by researchers Moore & Davenport.[32]

Existing choices in New York State are largely the result of local district flexibility in meeting the needs of the community. Districts have responded to local needs, shaping educational options which suit the demographics, resources and aspirations of their particular communities. It appears that for most districts in our state, choice, if feasible, is only one of a number of avenues to school improvement. Local innovation and creativity, the wellspring of effective school reforms, must continue to be encouraged.

NOTES

1. The total number of districts (404) includes two anonymous districts and excludes two incomplete returns.

2. Seventeen districts supplied information on alternative or magnet schools. The response was low to this section of the survey form and the quantity and quality of information received from the districts varied greatly. As a result, this information was considered incomplete and not presented in this report.

3. Mary Anne Raywid, The Case for Public Schools of Choice, (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation, 1989), p. 21.

4. Ibid., p. 20.

5. New Jersey State Department of Education, Public School Choice: National Trends and Initiatives (Trenton: New Jersey State Department of Education, December 1988), p. 66.

6. Lewis W. Finch, "The Claims for School Choice and Snake Oil Have a Lot in Common," American School Board Journal 176 (July 1989):31.

7. H. Lawrence Jones and Henry Marockie, "Open Enrollment: A Decade of Experience," ERS Spectrum 5 (Spring 1987):40.

8. New Jersey State Department of Education, Public School Choice: National Trends and Initiatives, p. 47.

9. Edward B. Fiske, "Wave of Future: A Choice of Schools," New York Times (4 June 1989), p. 32.

10. New Jersey State Department of Education, Public School Choice: National Trends and Initiatives, pp. 16, 17, 27, 67.

11. William Snider, "The Call for Choice: Competition in the Educational Marketplace - A Special Report," Education Week (24 June 1987), p. C8.

12. National Governors' Association Task Force on Parent Involvement and Choice, Time for Results - The Governors' 1991 Report on Education: Supporting Works, (Washington, D.C.: National Governors' Association for Policy Research and Analysis, August 1986), p. 83.

13. Richard F. Elmore, Choice in Education, Center for Policy Research, December 1986, p. 31.

14. Mary Anne Raywid, The Case for Public Schools of Choice, p. 27.

15. Donald R. Moore and Suzanne Davenport, "Cheated Again: School Choice and Children At Risk," School Administrator 46 (August 1989):14.

16. Center for Educational Innovation, Model for Choice: A Report on Manhattan's District 4, (New York: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, June 1989), p. 20.

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APPENDIX A

The Survey Form

NEW YORK STATE
SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION
119 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12210 • (518) 465-3474

CHOICE IN NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

This questionnaire is intended to assess the extent of school choice in New York State public schools, how choice policies are developed, and the impact of the policies on districts' educational programs and operation. For the purposes of this survey, the terms "intradistrict choice" and "open enrollment" are used interchangeably and are defined as the ability of students and parents to opt for any one of a number of elementary schools, middle/junior high schools, and/or high schools within a district.

Descriptive Information

1. District Name _____

2. District Type [ ] Rural [ ] Suburban [ ] Small City [ ] Big Five

3. Please indicate school configuration within your district (give number of schools for each configuration):

Grade Levels (Examples: PreK-5, K-12, etc.)	No. of Schools

Choice Between Schools Within a District

4. Does your district have an open enrollment policy permitting parents to choose among schools in the district?

	Elementary Level	Middle School/Jr. High Level	High School Level
A. With certain limitations, students can attend any school	[ ] yes [ ] no	[ ] yes [ ] no	[ ] yes [ ] no
B. With certain limitations, students can attend some schools	[ ] yes [ ] no	[ ] yes [ ] no	[ ] yes [ ] no
C. Year choice option was introduced	_____	_____	_____
D. Students must attend assigned schools	[ ] yes [ ] no	[ ] yes [ ] no	[ ] yes [ ] no
E. Not applicable, only one school	[ ] N/A	[ ] N/A	[ ] N/A

*5. **Please enclose a copy of your current enrollment policy or plan and any pertinent evaluation of its implementation.**

6. Has your district:

A. Offered choice, then discontinued the plan? [ ] yes [ ] no

_____ Year Why? _____

_____

B. Considered offering choice, then decided not to? [ ] yes [ ] no

_____ Year Why? _____

_____

C. Considered eliminating choice, then decided not to? [ ] yes [ ] no

_____ Year Why? _____

_____

D. Eliminated choice, then reinstated it? [ ] yes [ ] no

_____ Year Why? _____

_____

* **NOTE: If your district has no open enrollment or choice, including no alternative or magnet schools, please proceed to question #18.**

7. **In the current school year (1988-89), how many public school students have opted to attend a public school in the district other than the school in their attendance area?** _____

8. What were the major reasons why an intradistrict choice policy was instituted? (Please number those items that apply in order of importance to your district, with 1 being the most important reason, etc.)

_____ Parent organization requested or recommended
_____ Community/business advisory group recommended
_____ Increase parental involvement
_____ Improve efficient use of space
_____ Increase the number and availability of specialized academic programs
_____ Reduce costs
_____ Provide equality of opportunity to all students
_____ Prevent losing students to non-public schools
_____ Create equitable class sizes across grade levels
_____ Other (please describe) _____

_____

9. How has intradistrict choice directly affected district expenses (e.g., staffing requirements, transportation, bricks and mortar)?

Costs have: [ ] increased [ ] stayed the same
[ ] decreased [ ] not been analyzed

If costs have been affected, please explain which costs and why. _____

_____

_____

_____

10. Do you believe intradistrict choice has affected student achievement for those students participating in open enrollment? [ ] yes [ ] no

Achievement has: [ ] improved measurably
[ ] stayed the same
[ ] declined measurably
[ ] effects of open enrollment on student achievement have not been verified

What is the basis for your judgement? _____

_____

_____

11. Due directly to open enrollment, the number and/or variety of programs has:

[ ] increased [ ] stayed the same [ ] decreased

If programming has been affected by open enrollment, please explain how.

_____

_____

_____

12. Due to open enrollment, parental involvement has:

[ ] increased [ ] stayed the same [ ] decreased

If parental involvement has been affected by open enrollment, please explain how.

_____

_____

_____

13. Administrative Considerations (check one outcome for each consideration):

Open Enrollment Has Made	More Difficult	No Effect	Easier
Provision of support services	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Allocation of classroom space	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Staffing	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Compliance with state regulations	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Student recordkeeping	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Student grouping	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Transportation of students	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Other (please describe) _____

_____

Please explain briefly (include examples where relevant) _____

_____

_____

14. How does your district inform parents about choice options?

[ ] Letters to parents [ ] Informational meetings
[ ] Newsletters [ ] Local press
[ ] Other (please describe) _____

_____

15. Within the parameters of your current district transportation policy (check one):

[ ] District provides transportation only to schools within home school attendance areas
[ ] District provides transportation, regardless of school choice
[ ] District provides transportation to specific schools only, e.g., alternative or magnet schools
[ ] District does not provide any transportation for students
[ ] Other (please describe) _____

_____

16. Students cannot attend other than assigned school if:

[ ] Space is unavailable in school of choice
[ ] Compliance with a desegregation order is in question
[ ] Services cannot be provided adequately to certain populations, e.g., students with handicapping conditions, students with limited English proficiency, etc.
[ ] Other (please describe) _____

_____

17. If your district operates alternative schools or magnet schools with special curricula, please indicate so below (please type or print).

School Name	Year Established	Theme	Grade Level(s)	1988-89 Enrollment	Operated By BOCES? (Yes/No)

(Continue on separate sheet if additional space is needed. Descriptive materials on alternate or magnet schools in your district will be an asset to this study. Please enclose any information that will help describe the range of choices within your district.)

Choice Between Districts

This section is designed to assess actual student movement between districts. Responses should not include distance learning or sharing arrangements via telecommunications, or BOCES programs in district facilities.

18. Are students who are residents of other districts permitted to attend school in your district? If no, proceed to Item 23.

    [ ] yes [ ] no

19. Is a fee or tuition charged to students from outside the district?

    [ ] yes [ ] no

20. How are out-of-district students admitted?

    [ ] On a space available basis
    [ ] No restrictions
    [ ] Other (please describe) _____

    _____

21. How many out-of-district students are currently enrolled in your public schools? _____

22. Does the district teacher contract or current practice allow children of non-resident teachers to attend?

    [ ] yes [ ] no
    Tuition free? [ ] yes [ ] no
    If yes, how many attended this year (1988-89)? _____

23. In the current year (1988-1989), how many resident students have opted to attend other public school districts on a full time basis? _____

24. In the current year (1988-89), how many students from your district have taken courses through cooperative agreements with other districts, excluding BOCES programs? _____

Additional Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____